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# Thoughts and words and smooth, wet ink

SEVERAL YEARS AGO, I WAS PRIVILEGED TO SIT IN ON A LECTURE by Oliver Sacks, the world-renowned neurologist who's written a bunch of books, including *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat*, *The Island of the Colour-blind*, *Awakenings* (the source for the movie) and most recently, *Musicophilia*.

I found him a fascinating speaker and listened raptly, as did almost everyone else in the audience (an unhappy five-year-old and a snoring elder come to mind in the "almost" category). About halfway through, Sacks said something that made me sit up straight in my seat. My companions grabbed my arms to keep me from leaping to my feet.

"For me," he said, "ideation has always been very close to speech. I often don't know what I think about something until I start to talk."

*What?!? I thought. OLIVER SACKS thinks that way? I think that way! I'm not a nutcase!*

A little background is necessary before you can understand why this was such a welcome affirmation. All my life, I've earned a living with my fingertips, splurbling out rivers of words for fun and profit. Well, at least for fun and dog food. So my fingertips are pretty well tied in with the CPU in my brain. At this point, I can barely stammer out "Good morning" without writing it out first so I have a cheat sheet.

This splurbling has often baffled those of my colleagues who carefully outline what they want to say, then worry about how they say it. They set down main points and supporting statements and go through all kinds of contortions to make sure their arguments and/or information are logical and ordered correctly.

Rarely will I do this, although sometimes extremely complex or technical material requires it.

More often, information and events float around in my brain and organize themselves as they flow down my neck, through my arms and into my fingertips. This is especially obvious when I write editorials, particularly editorials about topics I don't think I have thought about too much. Many times, I've thought I have no idea what I think of the topic and rather dreaded the attack on the blank page.

And then I sit down at the keyboard.

As if magic bubbles up from the keys, I'm pleasantly surprised to find that as fingertips touch keys, words flow sweetly out. What proceeds, with little conscious effort from me when things are going well, is a cogent, sensible, and sometimes even elegant argument where I thought there was void. Well, some people would argue that point, insisting that "void" is the default position. But they don't inhabit my world.

It used to drive one of my managing editors crazy. He was one of the think-and-outline, rearrange-the-outline, think-and-

outline-some-more guys and really struggled to get his thoughts in order. "How do you *do* that?!?" was his refrain, accompanied by a frustrated pair of fists tugging at his rapidly receding hair. I felt guilty, because I didn't know. It just happened, like flowers in springtime.

After hearing Dr. Sacks, I had a better idea about what was going on: The ideas were so tied into the words that one precipitated the other. The words gave form to the ideas rather than describing them. Evidently, many people think in images and then have to find words to describe them (or so his research seemed to indicate—and truthfully, sometimes my brain works that way, too).

I wasn't alone anymore! I was not a bizarre freak! At least one other person on earth had a brain that worked like mine! This relieved me of a bit of the sense of weirdness that's been my lifelong companion because of my estrangement from what a benighted society considers normal. But most pen collectors probably know that feeling, too.

Interestingly, if words start to gather themselves in my head about a particular subject, I'd bloody well better find some paper and a pen and get them down, because otherwise they'll be gone forever. The ideas will dissipate, too, lost for all time. I know, I know, some will shout *huzzah!* at that prospect, but they don't count in my world, either

You're probably wondering what on earth this has to do with pens, although the more canny among you (and those of you whose brains ideate through words) have probably figured it out: my (and maybe your) attraction to pens stems, I suspect, at least partly from the fact that the pen's structure and functioning is analogous to our brains.

Before you spit coffee on your magazine, bear with me for a bit. A pen is linear and our brains aren't, of course; at least, the functional MRIs researchers are so fond of show that electrical energy hops all over our brains in convoluted sequences. With a pen, you have the ink sac at the top, and the nib at the bottom, so the only way anything can flow is downhill (discounting quantum mechanics).

Ink flows down the ink sac, through the feed and along the tines, onto the paper, as smoothly and consistently as the hand that guides. In a way, the fountain pen completes that river, the final channel that finishes the journey of the word from brain, through arm and hand, along pen barrel and nib to rest, for good or ill, on paper, and thence to other minds. That kind of makes a pen an essential part of our brains. At least, of my brain. I like that.

Anna Lawson, *Editor*

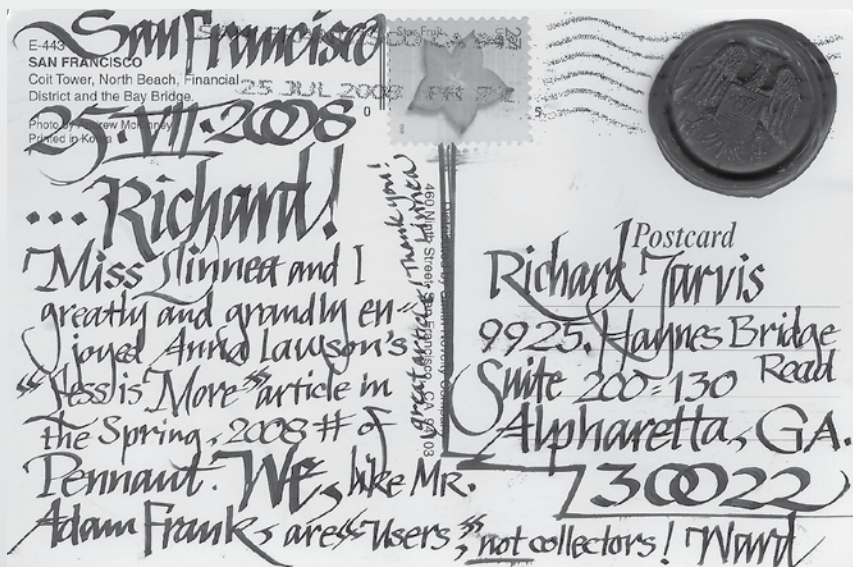
# FROM OUR PEN PALS

## THE PENNANT GETS SOME COMPLIMENTS

Hi Rick,

Yesterday I received the latest *Pennant* and this morning started through it. What great work you guys do and I always look forward to its arrival. With *Pen World* having gone to a glitzy photo op of primarily limited editions, jewelry, watches, and who's who among the rich and famous, and only an occasional article in *Stylus* on vintage pens, your publication now is the only one that provides interesting, helpful information of vintage pens, everything from repair to history. And you do such with only volunteers. Amazing. Keep up the good work.

John Harwood



Postcard from Ward Dunham to *Pennant* Editor Richard Jarvis.



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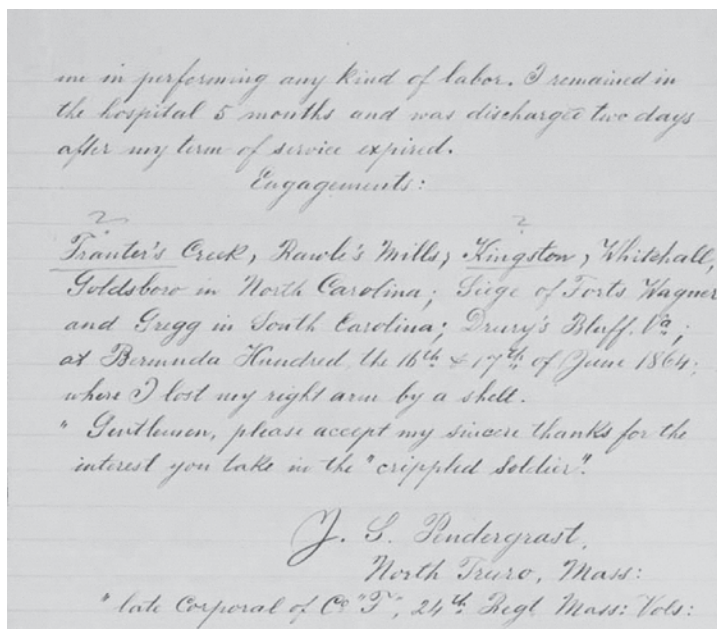
## ON THE COVER

Front cover. Painted pens from various manufacturers. From the collection of Bert Heiserman.

Back cover. Early Waterman Christmas ad. Compliments of Sam Fiorella.

*I have received requests for advice on a topic that the war has made timely for many: handwriting after injury, loss of function, or amputation of the writing hand/arm. This article will refer to all these situations as "hand loss."*

In the United States, the issue of handwriting after hand loss gained public attention shortly after the Civil War, when veterans' affairs activist William Oland Bourne organized and funded two handwriting contests for Union soldiers and sailors who had learned to write left-handed after losing their right arms during the Civil War. Bourne's first contest, in 1866, offered cash prizes totaling \$1,000 – equivalent in purchasing power to roughly \$50,000 today. One entrant, Private J. S. Pendergrast, won \$20 (several months' wages at that time) for this sample describing the 1864 battle where he lost his right arm:

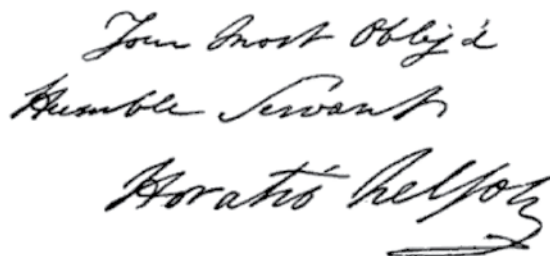


**Fig. 1. Two years after losing his writing hand, this man wrote better than many people who still had theirs.**

Developing this level of skill with his other hand within two years proves that hand loss need not remove you from pendum.

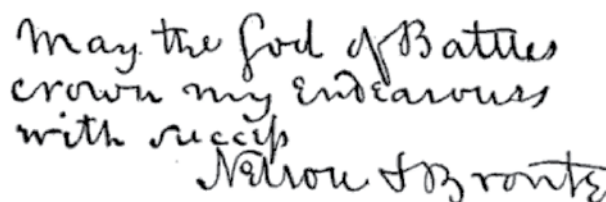
In fact, hand loss puts you in illustrious company, as evidenced by the handwriting of Lord Nelson, before and shortly after he lost his right arm at the Battle of Tenerife. (Nelson illustrations from p. 119 of *Ambidexterity* by John Jackson.)

Fig. 2 shows that changing your writing hand may alter much of your handwriting: from your slant to letter-shapes (note the differences in each sample's version of "Nelson") to choice of pen. (Lord Nelson apparently went from somewhat flexible quills to rigid ones cut on an angle.) Research published in 1997 by Latrobe University confirms that successful change of writing hand usually produces major changes in the writing. The research also found that hand-



Lord Nelson's Writing before losing his right arm.

Fig. 5.



Lord Nelson's Writing with his left hand shortly after losing his right arm.

**Fig. 2. Although Lord Nelson would have won no penmanship prizes with either hand, his post-amputation left-hand writing (second sample) shows at least as much speed and control as his pre-amputation right-hand writing (first sample). In fact, most people find Nelson's post-amputation writing more legible than his pre-amputation writing.**

loss survivors may have an easier time learning to write with a prosthetic than learning to write with the other hand. (As this article went to press, I learned of recent major advances in hand and arm prostheses which improve their performance at complex tasks such as writing. For details, refer to the October 2008 *Scientific American* report listed in the bibliography: "With Open-Source Arms" by Sam Boykin). However, since I have, as yet, no experience with prosthetics, the present article will only cover learning to write with the other hand.

Given past success and present research on handwriting after hand loss, one would expect to find many handwriting programs designed specifically for hand-loss survivors. However, when I contacted veterans' organizations, VA hospitals, and rehabilitation clinics, my requests for information on this subject typically met with no response beyond a vague "Well, they should just try to practice."

Since I could not find handwriting instruction resources designed for hand loss survivors, I had to experiment. And I had to experiment on myself, because I have not yet had the opportunity to work with a hand-loss survivor. Since I have two hands, I have tested the advice in this article by sitting on my writing hand (the right) while trying



**Fig. 3. Caps off to one-handed writing! Uncapping a pen took me about 10 seconds the first time I tried it single-handed, but only two or three seconds after that.**

to uncapping a fountain pen, fill or flush it, and control pen and paper.

I have also consulted two well-known guidebooks for amputees: *One-Handed in a Two-Handed World* (referenced above) and *How to Conquer the World with One Hand ... And an Attitude*. Strangely, although they cover most manual tasks, they

say nearly nothing on handwriting. (*One-Handed in a Two-Handed World* does suggest using paperweights, but urges using a rubber stamp for signatures. The other book says nothing at all on the subject). Still, I recommend both guides: because their detailed suggestions for developing one-hand skill and confidence in other tasks seem likely to increase skill and confidence in one-hand writing too.

### At the outset

Hand loss can demoralize. “How can I uncapping a pen one-handed? How can I fill it or flush it out? How can I keep the paper steady as I write? Can I write?”

To uncapping a pen single-handed, hold it in your fist (cap upward), with your fingers just below the cap. Keeping your lowest three fin-

gers tight, loosen the grip of your thumb and index finger so you can work them upwards onto the cap. Tighten your thumb and index finger around the cap. You can then move your thumb and index finger as needed to loosen and remove the cap.

Of course, you can always get a pen that just clicks open (such as the Namiki Vanishing Point). However, learning to uncapping a pen one-handed makes it easier to learn to fill or flush a pen.

To open an ink bottle single-handed, first put the ink bottle in a small zip-top plastic bag. Leave the bag open. Sit down and grip the bagged bottle tightly between your knees. Reach into the bag and unscrew the bottle lid. The bag will catch any spills.

To flush and fill a pen one-handed—Begin by uncapping the pen and opening the bottle as described above. (If you wish to flush the pen, do this by a sink and start the water running.) Put the cap and bottle on a flat surface, and open the barrel if the mechanism requires that. To open the barrel and operate the mechanism, use the one-handed pen uncapping technique: thumb and index finger around the part you need to move, the remaining fingers around the part you need to stay still. Practice with each of your pens – you now have the best excuse ever to spend time playing with your collection!

To keep paper steady (and to move it as necessary) while you write—I recommend either taping the paper in place, or using paperweights, as illustrated below in the section “Positioning Your Remaining Hand for Writing.” Paperweights worked better than tape for me, because they allowed easy repositioning of the paper as needed). If your hand loss has left you most of the arm, you can probably use that arm to hold down your paper as you write. You may even find that you can reposition your writing paper by using the remainder of your arm to push the paper slightly left or right whenever necessary.

### Position remaining hand for writing

To harness the full scribal potential of your remaining hand, you will need a paper position that works well for that hand. (For example, if you formerly wrote right-handed but you must now write left-handed, you will need a paper position that works well for left-handers.)

Fig. 5 shows two left-hand and two right-hand writing positions. Each set of positions (left-hand and right-hand) includes one overwriter position (hooked wrist) and one underwriter position (straight wrist). When I used the hand I do not ordinarily write with (my left hand), I found that my left hand seemed to gravitate to a straight-wrist position and that I wrote much better that way, even though my right hand tends towards a hooked-wrist position. When I tried to stop my wrist position from changing, I had much more trouble controlling my pen and even organizing my thoughts.

According to research on handedness and brain dominance by University of Chicago neuropsychologists Jerre Levy and Marylou Reid, left-handed underwriters and right-handed overwriters both have their language centers on the right side of the brain. (Similarly, right-handed underwriters and left-handed overwriters both have language on the left side of the brain.) So changing your writing hand probably requires



**Fig. 4. Steady and spill-free between your knees, ready for a single hand to open.**

## left hand, overwriter position



## right hand, overwriter position



## left hand, underwriter position

## right hand, underwriter position

**Fig. 5. Four hand positions for one-handed writers: overwriting and underwriting with left hand, and overwriting and underwriting with right hand. The small black-bordered squares represent paperweights or tape.**

changing your hand position too, so that your new writing hand can still “wire up” to your language centers. (For example: if you used to write with a straight wrist, to write with the other hand you should probably hook your wrist—and *vice versa*, of course.)

Please note that the above represents only what seems to work so far. If one or the other position does not work for you, change it until you find something that works better – then tell me about it.

### Strokes to shapes to script

Now you have to teach your hand to move the way you want it to. Lift your hand into the air. Reach high and move downwards, again and again, as if painting a tall fence. You don’t have to keep your strokes entirely vertical, but do try to keep them straight and consistent. Then gradually reduce the size of your strokes as you gradually speed them up. Notice between downstrokes your hand moves upward, allowing you to form letters such as v and w. Curving that upstroke allows forming letters like u and n. “Air-writing” these simple letters will help you form more difficult letters.

Once you feel confident about writing a few letters in the air, challenge yourself to write them on paper. Use unlined paper at first – you’ll have enough to do just forming the letters, without worrying about lines right away.

Write only a few minutes at a time, especially at first. Four or five short daily writing sessions will produce faster, less tiring results than longer sessions. When you can produce a few letters reasonably well,

practice writing your first name. Once you feel confident with that, add the rest of your signature. Practice signing your name – in the air, then on paper—and don’t forget to register the new signature with your bank.

### Moving my left hand in the air:



### Applying similar movements to letters on paper:



**My left hand needs work, but it has shown it can do the job.**

**Fig. 6. An air-writing exercise and some letters on paper by my left hand.**



***But can my other hand  
sign my name?***

***The first time I tried ...***

*Kate Gladstone*

***Not pretty yet ...  
but not hopeless either.***

***For comparison,  
my right hand signature:***

*Kate Gladstone*

**Fig. 7. Signing my name left-handed (top) two or three days into my efforts. Compare with my usual right-handed signature (bottom).**

As your hand control begins to improve, start shopping for pens. Remember that your pen needs may have changed—so try a wide range of pens (even pens you used to hate) and talk to the pen specialists. You will find them very understanding and appreciative of your efforts to remain a happy pen user. At this stage, perhaps also pick up some lined paper to help keep your writing even. (For extra help with alignment and proportions, try paper with line formats specifically intended for handwriting practice. One company, Therapro, makes a series of handwriting practice papers called “Stage-Write,” designed by me.)

Once you have found some pens and paper that help your new hand gain control, you may want to pick up a handwriting book or instructional CD-ROM. Look for one whose style you would enjoy using and feel capable of using with your less gifted hand. In time, a hand loss survivor can write very impressively (remember Private Pendergrast’s sample), but why not begin on the plain side rather than immediately pursuing embellishments? (Note that Lord Nelson’s writing after hand loss became simpler as it became more legible.)

If you have lost your right hand, I particularly recommend the *Left Hand Writing Skills* books and CD-ROM from Robin’s Wood Press. Although this series was designed for naturally left-handed students, the uncluttered letter-style and thorough approach should make it a useful resource for the “accidentally left-handed” too. For left- or right-hand writing after hand loss, also consider Getty-Dubay’s *Write Now* textbook or Nan Barchowsky’s *Fluent Handwriting* textbook/CD-ROM combination.

I look forward to knowing how—or if—these suggestions have helped any *Pennant* reader. Please write and share your own experiences and suggestions for future columns.

---

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## *Facts On Hand Loss*

- Some 350,000 Americans lack one arm or one hand.
- Another 450,000 Americans live with a paralyzed arm or hand.
- About 4,500,000 Americans suffer from Repetitive Stress Injury which forces them to manage life one-handed for a while.
- Sporting injuries and everyday accidents, from tennis elbow to broken bones, require an unknown (but probably large) number of people to function one-handed either temporarily or permanently.

*From One-Handed in a Two-handed World by Tommye-Karen Mayer.*

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The quality, durability and stability of pen materials are something I live with each time I take a pen apart. I thought it could be useful to provide an overview of pre-1960, non-metallic materials used in pen manufacturing. After 1960 there was an explosion in the different kinds of plastics used in making pens, making it hard to generalize about which manufacturer consistently used high-quality material in their pens. Unfortunately I do sometimes see examples of these newer plastics on my workbench showing lack of quality control or inappropriate designs. Let me begin with a review of the broad groups of materials such as hard rubber (HR) and later plastics, followed by some pens made by specific companies.

### Hard rubber

Hard rubber is extremely durable and stable, particularly black HR. There is a justifiable concern that HR tends to crack. The reason that happened is because HR tends to “temper” over time and become brittle. The amazing part of HR is that it also has a memory, and heat will restore that memory. HR can be heated to well over 170 F (almost too hot to touch) and not suffer any damage. For that reason HR sections and feeds can be repeatedly heated and not only do they maintain material integrity, but they can be restored to their original material configuration. When I started to do pen repairs, I approached black HR with a great deal of trepidation and, in time, it has become one of my favorite materials.

Once color other than black is added to HR, it begins to change character. Red is very similar to black in many ways. It is slightly more brittle and a little less flexible. When black and red are combined, the material goes a little further down the slope. Other combinations of colors—blue, green, olive or rose—all have less ability to take impact and lower tensile strength. Yellow is a real problem. Here the material begins with built-in brittleness and, with aging, becomes even more so. Heat will restore yellow to something less than its original configuration, as if there is something about yellow that blocks full memory restoration; this is probably one reason why there are almost no yellow HR feeds and sections, although advances in rubber chemistry after 1950 have produced very stable colored rubber.

### Plastics

The next generation of plastics such as Bakelite (formaldehyde or cellulose acetate), Lucite, and a large family of celluloids (cellulose nitrate) were used in pen manufacturing. But first let me say a word about casein, a much-maligned material. There is a major problem with casein: it absorbs water at about two to three times the rate of celluloid. In every other property casein matches up well with celluloid, and does better in color stability. While moisture absorbency lowers the quality of casein, the problem turns out to be an erratic one. Casein that stays in the location where it was made remains very stable. It does not like big swings in humidity: such as 1930s summer humidity in Chicago and then dry central heating in the win-

ter. In time, such humidity swings can cause some loss of material integrity. Do keep in mind that from the mid-1920s to well into the 1950s a large number of casein knitting needles were made and sold. These needles continue to be in good shape today. The repair problem for caseins is that they resist common solvents and, unless the surfaces are extremely clean, an adhesive joint can pull apart after many humidity swings.

Celluloid turns out to be a very good material for pens. It has good impact resistance, good tensile strength and is resistant to most of the common environmental contaminants. Over the past 70 years since their introduction, celluloids have also shown their weaknesses, the primary one being color stability. The lighter colors such as green and cream tend to either fade or darken. Along with the fading, there is a likelihood of crazing. This correlation is reasonable in that crazing is the loss of material integrity, and fading can be seen as the first stage of that disintegration. Darker colors such as blue, brown and red can take on a darker stain. I have not seen enough crazing with this kind of darkening, so I can't propose any correlation between the two. I have heard of suggestions that gas release from new sacs causes this kind of darkening. I doubt that relationship, because even the slowest chemical reaction would have taken place within 2-3 years. Yet, we do not have documented evidence of this or reports of short runs of specific product lines. I suspect that the chemical reactions resulting in the darkening of these materials are the result of the death throes of a sac combined with the chemicals and dyes in the ink. Similar kinds of staining can be seen in the cap surrounding the hard rubber inner cap. Ultraviolet radiation can also darken colors, but I've seen too many dark barrels with great caps to believe that is a major cause.

The bad news is that yellow does not work in celluloid either. The material becomes more brittle and tends to crack. Celluloid also shrinks over time. On threads this not too serious a problem, because using heat it is possible to expand or contract threads. But inside a piston barrel it is a much more serious issue. Commonly, the piston rod is pulled up the barrel and the barrel going toward the section shrinks. Short of machining the inside of the barrel, one solution is to cork the piston to the shrunk part of the barrel and then adding a thin rubber gasket behind the cork to expand to the larger diameter at the top of the barrel.

Finally, acrylics are used for pens beginning in the 1940s all the way until today. This is great material and fulfills most of the needs of pens. It's tough and all the colors work well with it. One issue is that while HR and celluloid maintain their surface integrity very well over time, acrylics tend to scuff up and become dull. One solution is to add more silicate (glass) to the formula. But too much silicate, which makes for a nice shiny pen will also make it more brittle. Parker 61s had this issue and, 20 years later, Montblanc made a similar mistake. A minor issue is that acrylic threads seem to wear faster than with those earlier materials. I don't know if this is related to how the material scuffs up.



Hard rubber barrel, bent with heat.



With heat, memory brings barrel to original shape.



Le Boeuf, cap with advanced crazing, barrel with moderate crazing.



Conklin with crazing on both ends.



Sheaffer cap with moderate crazing.



Sheaffer cap with advanced crazing.



Conklin cap, showing advanced crazing.



Conklin barrel, showing advanced crazing.

## Some pen observations

The major pen companies used most of the materials described above, designing their pens for a lifetime of use. At one time or another I've worked on just about every model made by these companies and following are some comments on a few that seemed more problematic.

I've seen a bunch of lighter-colored Le Boeufs that are either at an early stage of crazing or moving towards more advanced crazing. The darker colors and the solid colors seem to be doing just fine.

If you have a Parker Mandarin with a bandless cap, put it away and don't use it. There is a good chance that cap will crack. The banded caps have lots more protection and I would use that, but avoid posting.

Conklin piston barrels can shrink, sometimes down to the section. If it is hard to send the piston all the way down, then use it half or three-quarters filled.

On the other side of the coin, I've never understood why Sheaffers were not more popular. From their flat-tops all the way through the

Snorkels, these pens were built like tanks. And yes, I know, they write like tanks as well. There are flexible Sheaffer nibs available, but they are not easy to find.

Early Wahl Eversharps may look like they have celluloid barrels, but many do have a metal sleeve. When that sleeve corrodes, the section is almost impossible to get off. If you find one that looks like the section has never been taken off, there is probably a good reason for it.

Some early Conway Stewarts are made from casein. It is probably not a good idea to keep these pens in a plastic bag, but a much better idea would be a cedar box where moisture level would be relatively stable. I worked on a couple of Conway Stewart piston pens where ink and water was in direct contact with the casein. Casein is fine in a stable environment.

I have never found anything particularly quirky about the materials used in German or Italian pens other than what has been covered above. These pens were easily equal to the quality and durability of major American pen companies. I have not done enough French or Japanese pens to offer an opinion.

I want to end this column with two references that you might find useful. *Handbook of Chemistry and Physics: A Ready Reference book of Chemical and Physical Data*, 27<sup>th</sup> Ed, 1943-4, Chemical Rubber Publishing Co. I also have the 1927 edition and one from 1979. I use the 1943 one the most because it covers many of the plastics that I am interested in. There was not enough information on plastics in 1927 and much too much by 1979. If you are interested in hard rubber, try John Loadman, *Tears of the Tree: The Story of Rubber—A Modern Marvel*, 2005, Oxford. There are several interesting chapters on how rubber was made and a couple of great chapters on how rubber degrades. Good pen hunting!

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# THE 2008 PORTLAND PEN SHOW

A Busy Northwest Show

by Bruce Grembowski

The Portland Pen Show 2008 is in the books now, and I am still recovering! This was the best show yet for me; I actually sold quite a few pens instead of just buying. There were so many people there that I didn't have a chance to talk to everyone individually. That's the only problem with having a table.

Vendors at this years show included: Joel & Diana Hamilton and Sherrell Tyree of [www.inkpen.com](http://www.inkpen.com); Mary Burke of Conway Stewart; Marilyn Zornado for "Adventures in Pen Land"; Gail Arno; Brent Selna; Greg Minuskin and his wife,



Janet Takahashi, who was signing her book on journaling; Sam and Frank Fiorella along with their helpers from Pendemonium; Jim Marshall; Gary & Myrna Lehrer of [GoPens.com](http://GoPens.com); Taccia Pens as represented by Shu-Jen Lin; Bruce Hirschman of Bruno Corsini Pens; Laban Pens; Paradise Pens local outlet; The PCA, represented by board member Kim Sosin; Rick "The PENguin" Propas; John Schwab; Stuart Hawkinson; Michael McNeil; Harvey Rabinowitz; Brian Johnstone; Bruce "Grem" Grembowski; John Strother; Garry Hart; Ray Kuncz; Dave Smith; Jonathon Goss and Sarah of John Mottishaw's [nibs.com](http://nibs.com); Saul Kitchener; Alan Brookings; and Brian Kool of Kool's Kreations.

I tried my best to check everyone's wares; I saw quite a few pens that I lusted after, but settled for a Waterman Edson, Waterman Serenite, Waterman Executive trio, a Bruno Corsini "desk" pen with flexi Waterman No. 2 nib, Jim Marhsall's new pen repair book, some Waterman tools from Stuart, and of course miscellaneous items from Pendemonium.



We had quite a crowd on Saturday, and Laurel got a few kids in to see the Pens for Kids presentation.

Show organizer Carla Mortensen did a fabulous job as usual, keeping everything under control; whenever I saw her on the floor, she seemed like she was everywhere at once helping everyone.

*The Portland Show is one of the shows that gets talked about at nearly every other pen show as one that is growing and that offers a different crowd from the other pen shows. Kudos to Carla and the local pen collectors in the Pacific Northwest for building a local show with a national reputation in a few short years! —Ed.*

# THE WASHINGTON D.C. PEN SHOW

The D.C. Supershow Trading Frenzy Continues

by Richard Jarvis



never having considered the possible variations you could do with purple (or any of a number of other colors).

Despite rising travel expenses, the show featured sellers from Europe and South America. Many of these exhibitors were showing off pens that are hard to find for vintage pen collectors in the U.S. and several

collectors commented they were able to find Montblancs, Pelikans, Conway Stewarts and other European brands to complete their collections. Several vendors reported that interest is growing in the European pens and that seems to be reflected in all of the pen shows this year.

Even as many have talked about a slowing economy affecting attendance at pen shows, the Washington, D.C. Supershow in early August managed to draw its usual huge Saturday crowds and weekend-long trading frenzy among dealers and serious collectors.

The show is held in Tyson's Corner every August at the Sheraton Première hotel, and this year's show had the usual crowd of vendors packing the rooms on Thursday and Friday as well as on open-to-the-public days Saturday and Sunday. This show continues to draw among the largest crowds of any pen show and Saturday found the usual traffic jam in the parking lot as well as the line to get in snaking around the lobby of the hotel. Vendors reported brisk business even though buyers were being cautious this year, according to several of the sellers on the floor.

At the PCA's table, Kim Svabik was busy talking to members and potential members while, at the same time, getting a number of children busy on scavenger hunts around the room. As always, some of the items required explanation—pen sac in particular. One young girl was excitedly accompanying her 18-year old brother who was introducing her to pen collecting as he was already a "veteran" at the hobby. This show also featured the scavenger hunt assignment to find another Pens for Kids kid in the crowd, which seemed to be a popular addition. Outside in the lobby, the young and the young-at-heart busied themselves at the ink table with many commenting on



As with other shows this year, D.C. featured a number of repair people working on the floor of the show. Roger Cromwell, Aaron Svabik, Ron Zorn, Deb Kinney, Richard Binder—all stayed busy throughout the show. The availability of repairs at pen shows seems to be growing—as does the popularity of those services. The space in front of those tables stayed filled most of the day Saturday and Sunday. As pen shows go, the D.C. Show is one of those every collector should try to get to at least once. They always feature some vendors that don't go to other shows. And it also features a brisk social atmosphere in the hotel lobby and bar area.

# THE NEW YORK / NEW JERSEY PEN SHOW

A Strong Tradition Continuing in the Northeast

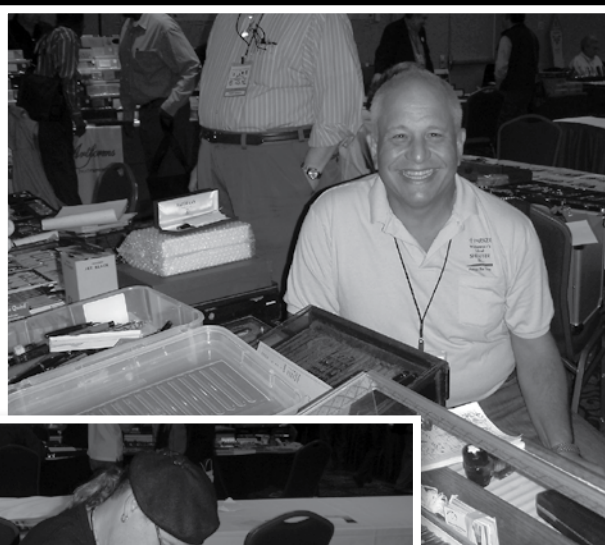
by Tom Levien

The tradition of a New York / New Jersey Pen show is strong. The National Pen Show in New Jersey first held in 1986 was one of the earliest shows in the hobby and was held up to 2000, which happened to be my first pen show. Now run by Maryann and Steve Zucker of PenStopOnline and Empire Writing Instruments, the show moved to New York City, where it was held for the next five years, and now, after a one-year hiatus, it has returned to New Jersey for the second year at the Renaissance Hotel near Newark Airport.

In addition to a world-class selection of vintage and new pens, this show was a pen repair paradise, with more pen repair experts working on pens than I remember ever seeing at one show. Ron Zorn of Main Street Pens, nibmeister Richard Binder, Aaron Svabik of Pentiques, Michael Masuyama of Mike-It-Work, and John Mottishaw of Classic Fountain Pens were all kept busy throughout the show. Personally, I took delivery of a repair from Ron Zorn and had him repair a vintage Conway Stewart 77; bought an incredible Snap-fil from Richard Binder; ordered a Nakaya from John Mottishaw and Sarah Swen; and reminisced with Aaron Svabik about our trip into Manhattan at last year's show.

Among new pen dealers, the vendor list included Fountain Pen Hospital, Jimmy Dolive of Total Fine Writing, and Chuck Swisher of Swisher Pens. Allen and Lil Gross of Pens Plus were there with a selection of their limited edition pens. Aurora and Conklin were among the manufacturers present. Custom pen turners included Barry Gross and Carl Seidl. Brian Gray of Edison Pen Company had a nice display of his interesting hard rubber pens.

There were many vintage pen dealers, including authors Gary Lehrer and Paul Erano. Lee Chait was there with his Parker 75s and related ephemera. David Isaacson had his usual broad selection of Vacumatics and other vintage pens. As is probably true for most shows, there are some dealers who only offer their wares at their local show and that was true here, with vendors I don't see in Philadelphia,



D.C., Ohio, or Chicago—the other shows I try to make.

There were seminars and workshops by Susan Wirth, Michael Masuyama, and John Mottishaw. Richard Binder and Ron Zorn did demonstrations at their tables.

One special feature of the show was the presence of Gary Blehm, cartoonist and creator of the PENMAN characters as well as acclaimed animator and Flash developer. Gary was working at the show and drew a business card size cartoon for anyone who asked, based on their own interests. His custom drawing for me had a fountain pen of course, and I couldn't resist buying

a poster with musical Penmen to hang in my basement for my boys. The show had three public days; on Friday from 11–7; Saturday from 10–5 and Sunday from 10–4. Steve and Maryann Zucker were assisted by Kim Sosin and

Alfonso Mur, one of a number of international attendees, who also hosts the Madrid Pen Show. Another was Sarj Minhas with his wife, Jasmine, at whose table I found two hard-to-source pens that had been on my wish list for ages. For the vendors, the show featured a one-time set-up, which is always a plus for the dealers. Traffic appeared brisk on Friday and Saturday and somewhat lighter on Sunday as seems to be true of many recent shows.

For me, pen shows are as much about the people as the pens, and I'm struck by how many of the folks I see that I consider good friends. Anyone who has access to a pen show and does not attend is missing one of the best parts of the hobby. Nothing wrong with buying online but nothing beats the experience of seeing the pens [and pen people] in person.

# THE 2008 DALLAS PEN SHOW

## D-Day: The Dallas Pen Show

by Will Thorpe

**Concept of Operations:** On 3–4 October, 2008 the North Texas Pen Collectors Club with Pete Kirby leading commenced operations at the Dallas Sheraton North with the mission of conducting a pen show. The club



led by Andy Lambrou successfully captured the attention of Public Forces offering a brief respite in the frenzied action. The amazing mix of modern and vintage pens kept the Public Forces occupied while Nicole

seized a well-lit room and adjacent hallway with their advanced guard, the base camp was smoothly established and by noon all forces were in place.

**The Defense:** The North Texas Pen Collectors Club had Dromgoole's Pen Shop defending the North berm. The East flank was held by Dan Reppert with Sam and Frank Fiorella of Pendemonium in reserve. Susan Wirth and Danny Fudge doing repairs established a perimeter at a critical access point on the South. The vital Western approach was in the hands of Joel Hamilton and Sherrell Tyree, backed up by Retro 51. Major forces in general support were Pete's Pen Shop, Inkpen and Go-Pens.com.

**Opposing Forces:** The first public assault was a wild-eyed crowd led by Pentracers Allan Quiat, Dennis Bowden, Paul Bloch, Allan Hall, Sue Ann Hall, Will Thorpe and Will Higgins.

**The Battle:** The North Texas Pen Collectors Club put up a terrific defense but the Public Forces numbering more than 600 pen enthusiasts easily overwhelmed the 100 tables. Public Forces captured a 1929 Sheaffer black and pearl from Sherrell Tyree, Sam and Frank fought back with some Japanese calligraphy brush pens to no avail with numerous bottles of ink going to the eager hands of the Public Forces. Susan Wirth and her league of Parker Pens were in hand to hand action at all times. Danny Fudge used every tool of the repair trade as expected of an expert. Tim Pierson with a reserve force of more than 3,000 pens found himself in the position of being surrounded. Sailor, Visconti, Stipula, Lominchay, Paradise Pens, Laban and Classic Pens



LeBlanc rallied the North Texas Pen Collectors with over 200 silent auction items.

**Golden Nib Awards:** Laban Pens rendered a staggering blow to Public Forces when they introduced their diamond-studded pens into the fray. The elegance and simplicity of the pens caused a speechless silence on the Western Front. Sailor Pen representatives ran a safe haven where all parties could take refuge and test the latest products. John Jenkins manned the PCA table with a fervor that was above and beyond the call of duty.

**Summary:** Not since The Battle of the Alamo has such a spirited and well-organized operation taken place in the Lone Star State.

**Hot Intelligence:** Reliable sources indicate that all sides have commenced planning for another major operation. D-Day is expected around October 2009.

# WHERE WILL THE PCA BE TOMORROW?

## Who Will Be the Next Collectors of Fountain Pens?

By Paul Erano

I MUST ADMIT, I AM NOT AT ALL SURE THAT FUTURE GENERATIONS will want to collect vintage fountain pens. Why should they? After all, the fountain pen is the product of our generation and the generations before us. We are the ones who wrote with them until, finally, the ball-point pen took its place. Therefore, isn't it we who are most likely to collect them and write with them again? What do old fountain pens offer a generation that is far more apt to text message or type on a computer than to write with any pen at all?

I am not sure how vintage fountain pens, our hobby—and by association the act of writing—will fit into the future's landscape. Technology has forever altered the attitudes and behaviors of our younger generation. It has diminished the connection between pen and writer. Do our children read and write today? Not nearly as much as they used to—instead, they prefer to watch TV and play video games.

Just as reliance on calculators weakens our children's ability to add, subtract, multiply and divide, computers weaken their imagination and resourcefulness. If they have a problem with composition or grammar, they point their mouse to spell check and use the computer's thesaurus to select an alternate word from a limited menu of easy solutions. Keyboards and cell phones take the place of pen and paper. "Snail mail" is a chant young people repeat over and over hoping to make handwritten letters, indeed, the act of writing with a pen, disappear completely. If you doubt me, watch a young person grip a pen or pencil and you'll understand the degree to which their writing skills have gone away.

These electronic gadgets strike at the very will of our younger generation and entice them away from reading and writing and the use or love of any pen or pencil. There is no point to fountain pens, any pen for that matter, without good handwriting. But handwriting is no longer emphasized in our schools. Teaching children to read and write, even how to hold their pens and pencils properly, is a problem. It does not help that a growing numbers of teachers, principals, parents, and school board members write and hold their pens and pencils the same way! At pen shows, I meet the same middle aged collectors and not enough young collectors to take the place of older collectors who have passed on. The occasional young collector who does stop by my table at a pen show to visit is far more likely to be interested in new pens; vintage fountain pens are far removed from other aspects of his or her modern life.

Yet, our hobby's future does not have to appear bleak. Why does literacy persist? Why is there continued interest and support for our hobby? Just look at the number of pen shows held throughout the country and how many vintage fountain pens are found on eBay, for example. Internet pen sites flourish, and electronic chat boards contain endless threads of discussion on pens and related issues. As for our children, the youngest generation of would be pen collectors - they are as bright and imaginative as any generation before them, deteriorating hand writing skills and electronic gadgetry notwithstanding.

And certainly, the computer and new technology have given more than they have taken away.

Could change and technology also be the means to keep our hobby vibrant and alive? Could the forces that attack the status quo also make room for new ideas to grow and flourish? It's no secret that the PCA has languished in recent years; the old ways have not always served the needs and expectations of a new generation of pen collectors. Members have been lost and it is an uphill battle to bring them back into the ranks. Our literature still contains lofty sounding goals, like the one which states that the PCA 'exists to foster and maintain the integrity of pen collecting, to encourage and promote effective communication and understanding among all collectors and to define pen collecting as an international hobby.' But to be frank, I'm not sure what this statement really means or, more importantly, how it will be put into practice.

Change has taken its toll, and to flourish we must look ahead. Our purpose must be clear, and we must meet the needs of all pen collectors, including those who enjoy the hobby for reasons different from our own. I know that the current board is keenly aware of the problems we face, and has asked for input from PCA members as it takes steps to revitalize the PCA. The return of *The Pennant* is one important step. So, too, are recent efforts that include member surveys, outreach at pen shows and the planned interactive use of the PCA's website. And I was especially glad to receive *PCAccent*; PCA's e-mail newsletter designed to keep members informed on news and happenings.

At the 2008 Philadelphia Pen Show, I sat very near the PCA booth. Our banner with our motto, written in big blue letters, was spread across the table. It read, "Keeping the history of writing instruments alive through member support and community education." As I watched people stop by to pick up a flyer—a few even signed up for membership—the term "community education" popped out at me. Outreach at pen shows is important, I thought, but it is not enough to reach the vast majority of pen collectors, most of whom do not attend pen shows. Many still do not know the PCA even exists. For any pen collector this is a shame, which is why I recommend that we expand our efforts into the community, as our slogan suggests, where real education can occur. Pen displays in public libraries and talks to community groups can go a long way to make pen collectors aware of our organization and its purpose, for example. And I've always dreamed of a National Museum of Writing.

The board is encouraging us to voice our concerns and to provide input as to the purpose of the PCA. My hope, in addition to a national writing museum, is that we continue to fight against the deteriorating writing skills and habits of our youth through programs like Pens for Kids. At the very least, I expect the PCA to be a place where ideas flourish and where activities enrich and inform collectors and bring us closer together. And, as I stated earlier, I expect it to be a place that is inclusive of all pen collectors.

**More >>> 33**



# Ink

# Tales of Spilled

by Anna Lawson

*We have a task for you.*

*Everybody has a spilled-ink story:*

*the worst, most horrible ink spill that ever happened to them. Most involve furniture or carpets, for obvious reasons. We're always in need of a good laugh, and that's why we want to hear your spilled-ink tales.*

*This is mine.*

**h**AVING JUST STARTED A NEW job with a company that had recently completed a move into a new, freshly renovated building, I was trying not to make waves (or mistakes). My new coworkers took my fountain pen use in stride, for the most part; people in publishing are pretty tolerant of wackos. Er, people's eccentricities. My officemate even thought the pens were kind of intriguing and watched and asked questions from time to time.

I used red ink to check through galley proofs, so I took a bottle of blood-red ink to my office and set it, along with a few other colors that entertained the production department, on the desk. Ranged along the left edge of my desk, the bottles were a cheerful counterpoint to the black-and-white of my days.

One morning not long after that, I was carrying a fresh cup of coffee to my desk when I tripped over a cord somebody had left coiled on the gray carpet. With my free hand, I adroitly grabbed the back of my chair to catch my fall, but the coffee-wielding arm kept going in its trajectory toward the desk. In struggling to avoid spilling the coffee, I jostled a whole bunch of other stuff, which in turn shot four of the ink bottles off the desk.

The bottles arced out over the edge of the desk. The officemate gasped. I shrieked. They tumbled over and over in their parabolic trajectory toward ground, and finally landed, bouncing and bumping together.

The red one shattered. And its blood-red contents spread all over the pale gray, freshly installed carpet.


My officemate burst into laughter (he's a twisted soul). I froze in panic, then whirlwinded into the usual flurry of disaster-mitigation activities. After using up two or three rolls of paper towels to soak up the huge puddle of red ink (how could a couple of ounces make that big a stain? Even *real* blood doesn't spread that far!), it looked mitigated enough that I tried a wet sponge.

Mis-take. *Huge* mistake. The ink, as I'm sure you know, started to spread like a virus in a preschool class. The officemate guffawed.

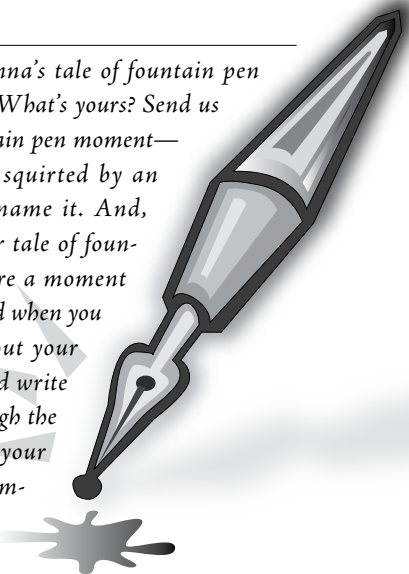
I gave that one up and flopped into my chair, trying not to let sweaty-eye syndrome overwhelm me. So much for any reputation I might otherwise have developed. Possibly, even, so much for the job. But so far, nobody'd come running in; it seemed to have been, if nothing else, a reasonably quiet disaster.

"What are we gonna do?" asked officemate once he caught his breath. I was unbelievably grateful for the "we."

"I dunno. I'm thinking." A brilliant flash lit up the room. Or at least, the portion of it before my eyes. I ran back to Composition (such an area no longer exists in most publishing offices) and borrowed a roll of masking tape. Crouching down on the floor, I placed it around the red stain, in the shape of a fallen body. The head was a little tricky, but it went all right.

Officemate laughed and slapped his knee. "Good one!" Not only did I not get yelled at, but the ink stain became a celebrated part of office lore and a mandated part of every visitors' tour. Talk about luck. 

Okay, there it is—Anna's tale of fountain pen woe and humiliation. What's yours? Send us your most awful fountain pen moment—ruined shirts, bosses squirted by an errant Snorkel, you name it. And, conversely, relate your tale of fountain pen pride. Is there a moment that sticks in your mind when you were proud to whip out your beloved Vacumatic and write away? We'll sort through the pile and run some of your contributions in upcoming issues of *The Pennant*. —Ed.



# THE BOOKWORM

A BOOK REVIEW

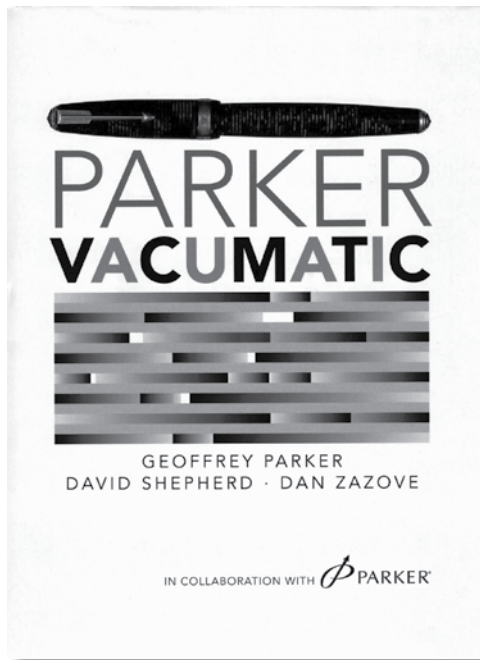
by Rick Propas

## Parker Vacumatic

Geoffrey Parker, David Shepherd, Dan Zazove in collaboration with Parker Pen Company  
Surrenden Pens Limited, Brighton, UK, 2008.  
\$80, 343 pages.

BETWEEN 1932 AND 1948 PARKER PRODUCED a pen that came to be known as the Vacumatic. Although the Vacumatic never achieved the iconic status of the "51," it was easily as innovative and stylish. Now there is a book that tells the whole story, *Parker Vacumatic*, by Geoffrey Parker, David Shepherd and Dan Zazove.

When introduced as the Golden Arrow in 1932, Parker's new pen featured two startling innovations, a striped laminated celluloid and a never-before seen filling system. Over the next sixteen years, the Vacumatic evolved through a dizzying array of model developments and changes. By the time the last pens were sold in 1949, the only thing that they had in common with the "60 handmade Golden Arrows [that] were placed on sale at Stevens Maloney, a stationery store in Chicago, as a trial during the dog days of the summer of 1932" were the filler (and that much changed) and the plastic (p. 51). The long run of change and innovation that marked the Vacumatic made it hard, however, for pen historians to create a single coherent account of the pen.



As early as the late 1980s Bob Tefft tried to provide a guide to the pen's development in the magazine *Pen World*, and, over the years, numerous publications and websites have tried to chronicle and sort out the development of the Vac, but with only limited success.

Pen books, as a whole, function in several different ways. There are the picture books that let us see pens that we otherwise might never get to appreciate. Histories of one or several makes inform us, and technical books give us understanding of the how—how pens are produced, their composition, etc. This book does all three, but that strength is also a weakness.

A brief look at the table of contents highlights the point. Divided into six chapters, this large-format, 343-page book, well made and sturdily bound, deals with the history, design and marketing of the pen as well as the so-called three generations of its development. A look into the chapters to subheadings shows a wide diversity of topics gathered together, some of which seem to fit well and others less so. But in a sense this is a quibble. Structure aside, the main issue is the contents.



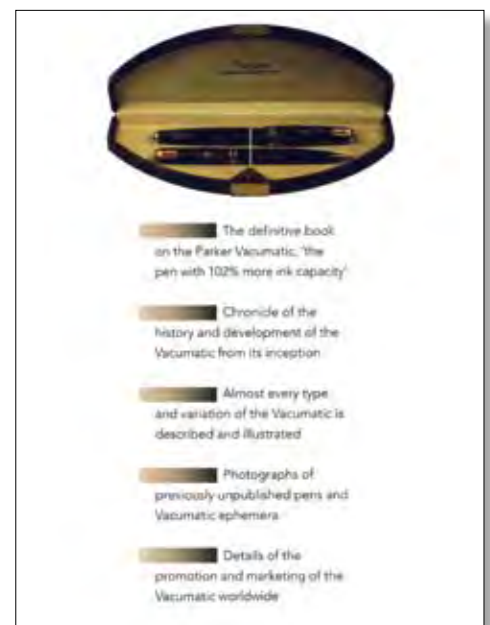
Here, the book's richness pays off. The casual reader who picks up this book will be able to learn in a few enjoyable hours what it took two generations of early collectors decades to dig out. The book is lavishly and well illustrated. Not only are there images of pens and reproductions of advertising, but also a wide a range of other materials too broad to describe. As a picture book alone, this volume would satisfy.

But then there is the text. Here one does come up against the sprawling nature of both the book and the subject. But, as far as I can tell, it is all there and more. No book is totally accurate, and this one must contain some errors, but none jumped out at me, and I have not heard any of the complaints that often accompany less accurate books. (We pen collectors—doctors, lawyers, teachers—are a tough audience.) But, structure aside, in terms of history this book satisfies. Again, the casual reader will enjoy the story of the pen's development, including lively sketches of the supporting personalities. At the same time the "expert" will find heretofore unrevealed aspects of the story of the Vac.

Then there is the technical. Here, again, the book is stunning. Images and diagrams, letters, and memoranda all tell the story of the development of the pens from start to finish.

So, is this book perfect? No. Is it essential? Yes. Is it satisfying? Yes. In sum, this is one of those books that every collector, Parker fancier or not, should have on her or his shelf. It's that good.

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# Diamond

by Marc Kolber, edited by David Moak • Pens from the collection of Doris Kolber

## Part IV: The War Years

The following is an edited version of Marc Kolber's memoirs of his family's pen business, the New Diamond Point Pen Co. The original notes were handwritten over a period of time, resulting in some chronological confusion that I have attempted to correct. The first pages were written around April 1985, the rest after November 1993. Marc Kolber died Jan. 26, 2003. Any changes in the text have been made for the sake of clarity. When Kolber began writing these notes, the original intent was to prepare an article for *Pen Fancier's* magazine. Doris Kolber, Marc's widow, passed the notes on to Rick Horne, and has graciously allowed them to be shared with the pen community. Doris Kolber also cleared up some points that had confused me. Part four of this series continues Kolber's family history of the company with the war years and how Diamond Point joined the rest of the manufacturing sector in the U.S. in the war effort while keeping the core business running. —Ed.

WITH THE START OF WORLD WAR II, ALL MANUFACTURING firms had to voluntarily curtail their civilian products in order to conserve raw materials for the war effort. The government gave quotas to each firm according to previous production history. A rationing system began. Manufacturers had to do a great deal of paperwork and go through a lot of red tape to get a license to purchase restricted raw materials such as brass, aluminum, steel and some plastics used in making pens and pencils.

Many times we had to substitute materials because, even though we had a license, the material needed wasn't readily available. Often the government had already acquired all of it. The materials available determined the quality of the items we produced. Sometimes the substitute material was unsatisfactory and had to be replaced.

Mr. Aaron [Kolber] was designated as the one to have contact with Washington. Several times he had to visit with those in charge at the War Materials Board to arrange all Diamond Point requirements. While there, he often had to make immediate decisions regarding substitutions. Making the right choice at these times was critical.

It was also a constant effort to keep the factory operational with enough materials always at hand. We had an experienced crew of workers depending on us. Pen making was not an easy undertaking with unskilled help. We couldn't afford to shut down for any reason.

The government generously gave us a sizeable quota for our line of desk sets in addition to our pen and pencil quota. Our line of onyx products required very little in the way of essential new materials. We had an ample supply of onyx for the near future. Our suppliers informed us their Mexican quarry had shut down, but they had an abundant number of large blocks and slabs on hand. And, as a contingency, they also looked into some other options. Years before, they experimented with boulders taken from the Cerayona desert. They hired a truck and crew to haul several larger boulders to the plant. If the center core was solid, the boulders might be usable. The samples that arrived were dark brown and polished to a high luster.

At this time, the government gave us a license to make a quantity of aluminum parts. Months later we filled the order but were greatly disappointed. The aluminum parts just weren't strong enough and broke in operation. Mr. Aaron went to speak with the Washington people to see what might be done. The officials in Washington informed us that aluminum gave problems before in a previous substitution. They then surprised us. Without any discussion, after seeing the aluminum parts, we received permission to get the metal we needed. We destroyed the aluminum parts.



# Dreams



## Seeking federal contracts

The war continued with no letup. Peace was still far away and business progressed smoothly, but retail sales of pens and pencils slacked off. Mr. Aaron realized he was writing an insufficient number of orders to keep his workers at their jobs. During an informal gathering of the family, the subject came up and several of us made suggestions. Most of us liked the idea of seeking government business. All departments of government offered contracts to qualified firms for the wide variety of materials necessary to fight this war.

Mr. Aaron called his contacts in Washington and put his previ-

## Mr. Aaron's challenge

Once again we heard from Larry Robbins. Evidently Robbins still clung to his desire to own Diamond Point. He relayed that Eversharp would pay top dollar to buy Diamond Point. This would enable them to add our quota of pens and pencils to their own production quota. They intended to operate Diamond Point as a separate division when the war ended.

At this point, Mr. Aaron began making waves for Mr. K, which disturbed the whole Kolber clan. The eldest son, his father's favorite, claimed Mr. K promised that he would own 100% of the com-



ous experience in Washington to good use. With the information he gathered, an appointment was made to appear at a certain hour. Arriving punctually, he spent a pleasant hour with two gentlemen and was satisfied with the results of the meeting. Samples were to be sent and, if favorably received, an order would be forthcoming. Mr. Aaron returned home satisfied he had done good job. The orders were subsequently received, produced, and shipped, keeping the factory operating.

pany stock when his father was gone. "Not so. Never was said," Mr. K replied. The elder Kolber wasn't well and was often in pain. The younger members of the family were sorry Mr. K had to bear this type of annoyance. Aaron pestered Mr. K for a couple of years without letting up.

Finally, in 1944, the day came when Aaron hired a lawyer and sued his father. With no other way out, Mr. K's lawyer joined in. The trial date fell on Dec. 11, 1944. It began with each side addressing the court.

Presentation of witnesses took quite a few days. The judge listened quite intently, taking in everything said and making notes. At the trial's end, the judge gave the younger Kolber a dressing down, saying his witnesses proved unbelievable. He said Mr. K's witnesses spoke from the heart directly to the issue. He even stated that brother Paul tried to help his nephew keep to the truth and was a very believable witness. The case was thrown out and Mr. Aaron left the courtroom and the company. For the first time since 1923, Diamond Point had no Mr. Aaron.

### War ends—the parade is right outside

New York City is the capital city of parades and Fifth Avenue is its heart. Since 1936, we saw them all, being in the center of downtown, a great neighborhood. At war's end, we stood toe-to-toe with total strangers watching the parade units passing in front of us. Everyone joined in the general conversation. Sometimes, from down the block, a tremendous roar went up, indicating that one area was treated to something substantially entertaining and special. The crowds were tremendously loud and boisterous but never unruly. We were watching the VE Day parade on May 8, 1945.

People from one building, who had been riding up and down the elevators anonymously for years would see a familiar face, get excited and smile after greeting each other, introducing themselves

after years of silence. People from different floors reacted in the same manner, smiling at each other in greeting. Children ran up and down the street, chasing after something in particular that attracted them. Everyone was in a holiday mood. The police officers kept the crowds separate from the marchers. The dignitaries, each in their own brightly colored limousine, waved at the mass of humanity and responded with cheers of their own. Then came the marching bands, with their loud music. No one was able to think. Flags were flying all over the place. Patriotism was rampant, filling the air with many a cheer. At this time and place, nothing could go wrong. All was right with the world once again.

Now we must turn to the people who looked out of those open windows. They had their own place in these happenings. Prior to the parade day they were busy cutting and tearing and shredding newspapers, storing it in containers, waiting for the main event. Their job was to toss and fling handfuls at the appropriate time so it lands on top of the parade passing below. A roll of toilet paper tossed out from the high-rise floors seemed to float down in one continuous streamer. Tons and tons of paper ultimately arrived in the garbage dump. The cleanup crews followed directly behind the last of the parade marchers. For VE Day, New York City did itself proud. New Yorkers do things right.



## After the war

When all material and production restrictions were removed in 1946, the pen business was a mess, just the same as with many other industries. There were no new customers, only regulars. Men and women became hunters, going into buildings in Manhattan to seek out firms who offered merchandise that was in short supply. They were like ants searching for the nest. They worked on a percentage, buying products in a jobber loft that would appear in a retail store, whose shelves would be empty by five o'clock. There really was a shortage of goods. Many people hustled around the wholesale and manufacturing neighborhoods scratching out a living by working for some retailer or other.

During this time, a gentleman appeared unannounced one day, wanting to speak with Mr. K. An acquaintance of Mr. K. recommended him as someone who was ready to do business. He wanted 500 gross of pens. He and others overseas were all set to do a large business in several select and distinct products. They picked suppliers who could deliver on time. Pens were attractive because of their fast turnover. His group had the necessary backing and was now seeking dependable companies that wouldn't desert them in mid-stream. He left us some references and a commitment to be back in two days. The deal he wanted was to have a

You must understand the gentleman was no different than many others. Merchandise was needed to fill the void. In the U.S., practically no consumer goods had been manufactured or delivered for the past four years—the rest of the world had been even longer without manufactured goods. Manufacturing the inventories needed to fill the big empty warehouses would take some time.

Taking things as they developed, we immediately had a steady stream of people placing orders. It was impossible to satisfy the demand for writing instruments in 1945. The world's production had been limited for the past four years. Business was excellent into 1946-47 even into mid 1948. Every company shipped tremendous amounts of pens overseas. With our own domestic requirements we about doubled our previous years output. We were producing pens and pencils by the bins full. There seemed to be no end to our manufacturing of varied styles of pens. We had to differentiate according to the price the customer wished to pay.

For the export market, we had two price ranges. In the first, a second quality pen, we plated all findings, the metal parts, well enough to last a reasonable time. The parts weren't the best, but they would stand up under normal use. The rest of the body and accessories would give good service to the user even longer. The second pen was our regular \$1 retail



set amount ready every two weeks up to a limit of 500 gross. This was not the first offer we received. We already supplied another firm on the smaller scale of 100 gross. It seemed until the world caught up the inventory deficit, this would be the world's way of doing business.

pen, made the way we did for our United States retailers. All parts were quality. We usually depended on that pen to make our living.

Each one of these pens, sold in the United States, had a guarantee to repair or replace the pen when necessary if defective in parts or workmanship. But customers pay extra for the guarantee



when they buy the pen. We took pride in our name after all these years. To say a pen is “Made by Diamond Point—Depend on it!” that meant something to us. We had been producing pens for a long time and expected to be around for a long time to come.

After the war, the first thing on the agenda was representation in the market place. We ended this period with only Louis Markovitz representing us in the local market of New York City and its environs. In response to an ad, Mr. K interviewed several candidates for sales positions. He selected only one—Aaron Schwartz, a graduate lawyer who spent the war employed in Washington. No one else had the personality or work ethic needed. He decided that Schwartz would travel the country as both Larry Robbins and Aaron Kolber had done before. He would be the main salesman. Over the next few months, we contacted others. Finally we had the makings of a sales organization. We rehired Herb Walker and Roger Nesbett, who previously had covered the New England territory. Herbert Henry, who formerly represented the firm in the thirteen western states, agreed to return with his own staff of salespeople. Another interview introduced Al Freefield to Mr. K. He assigned Al to cover the Southern States. Alec Kaplan would cover New York State outside of New York City, as well as Ohio and West Virginia.


Louis Markovitz, our New York City sales manager, visited B. Altman’s Department Store at the buyer’s request. They wanted a special to feature for an in store promotion, something to retail at a reduced price. Markovitz returned with six samples of onyx bases each mounted with a pen in a different color and size. The bases were all slightly damaged in shipping or shop accidents. As a result we accepted an order to deliver the one thousand pieces at an agreed upon date at the right price. We shipped the bases as requested. Altman’s placed a special table on the first floor, right in the middle of their heavy traffic. At sale time, they displayed a considerable number of desk sets. In no time flat, there was a call for additional sales personnel to help them. The customers overwhelmed the regular staff. Quickly, they brought more desk sets from the stock room. The sale was a great success, a complete sell out on just the second day.

Altman’s wanted more. We made some calls and were able to locate additional pieces. We took another order for an additional one thousand pieces. Two weeks later we shipped them the second order. The response again was terrific. This time it took five days to sell out. By the time Altman’s had satisfied its customers’ desire for pen bases, they had sold more than 3,400 units. That was one great sale.



## FTC intervenes in pen naming

The Federal Trade Commission placed the Diamond Point Pen Company on notice after the end of World War II that using the trade name "Diamond Point" on our clips was misleading. They ordered us to desist. The FTC claimed to have complaints from purchasers of our pens, who were truly expecting a diamond in the point. These customers were greatly disappointed with their purchases. We pointed out, after searching through all records available since its organization in 1873, that the trade name for the firm had always been "Diamond Point." We also had never heard any such complaints. Their action was a perfect example of uncalled for and unnecessary government interference in the workplace. Eventually we were given permission, for identification purposes, to use "Diamond P.P.C." on our clips. We also introduced the new trade name of "New Diamond" for our onyx line.

*In the next issue of The Pennant, we will wrap up the story of the postwar years at Diamond Point, including changes in the Kolber family as well as changes in the writing instrument industry. The next installment of Mr. Kolber's memoir will be the last in this series.* 

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*The mysterious*

# Clickit Fountain Pen

by Mike Walker & Pete Sacopulos

IT IS THE UNUSUAL COLLAR OR KNUCKLE AT THE MIDPOINT OF the barrel that first catches the eye and causes one to ask “What is it?” When fountain pen collectors think of pens with collars or knuckles attached or incorporated into the barrel of the pen, Conklin’s famous crescent filler is probably the first model that comes to mind. Additional manufacturers that used such a barrel ring included Evans and even the flimsy crescent knock-off Spors. But this pen is none of these.

There is another fountain pen, the Clickit, produced by an unknown company (to us anyway), that utilizes a full collar, one that completely encircles the barrel, as part of a unique filling mechanism. The Clickit filling mechanism operates by turning the collar to the right. As this is done both prongs of a tweezer-like mechanism in the barrel are pressed together. This action forces the air out of the sac or bladder; then comes the distinctive “click”; the prongs are released; the “tweezers” spring open; and the pen draws ink.

There is yet one more unique aspect to the Clickit filling system. This is a “safety” feature to prevent the filling collar from accidentally turning and ejecting ink at an unwanted time. There are two separate designs for the safety feature that we have found. One design places two opposing notches on one edge of the collar and corresponding tabs on the edge of the lower barrel piece. This lower piece is spring loaded, so by pulling out on it the tabs disengage from the notches and the collar can be turned to fill the pen. When the barrel piece is released, the tabs slip back into the notches and the collar is locked in place. It is believed that this was probably the first design because this locking system makes filling the pen a two-handed operation—and not an easy one at that.





The second design was likely an effort to simplify the filling mechanism while retaining the ability to lock or secure the filling collar. The spring mechanism was replaced by a threaded button on the end of the barrel. Much like the design used in the Grieshaber “hump” filler, the button is loosened to allow the collar/filling mechanism to move or turn and tightened to secure the collar in place.

Inside the barrel, and joining the two barrel pieces and the collar, is a metal tube about 3.4 cm long. This tube is attached to the upper barrel piece, while the collar operates around the tube, and the lower barrel piece slides slightly up and down on the tube. This tube, therefore, holds the whole barrel together so the parts can function properly.

It appears the Clickkits were made of rod stock colors and patterns commonly used by other manufacturers in the late 1920's and 1930's. Examples of Clickkits have been found in pearl and black marble, green and black marble, gray pearl marble, red/burgundy marble and also in brown pearl marble.

Clickit pens appear to have been offered with both gold-filled and nickel trim. The pearl and black and burgundy marble models have gold filled trim while the green and black, gray pearl and brown pearl were offered with nickel trim. There appears to be no variation in the cap bands or clips. The bands are approximately a quarter-inch wide and have cut outs in the shape of diamonds and horizontal lines. The name “Clickit” is inscribed linearly on a generic clip. In fact, the same bands and clips can be found on some Keystone pens of the same era. The nibs, too, seem generic. Some Clickkits are fitted with steel nibs and others with warranted 14K gold nibs. We believe Clickit did not

**More >> 33**

Opposite page, top: Unlocked filling ring collar; left: Button-controlled filling collar Clickit. Center: A collection of Clickkits. This page top: Clickit pen, cap posted.

# THE BOOKWORM

A BOOK REVIEW

by Tom Rehkopf

## *Waterman Past and Present: The First Six Decades*

Max Davis and Gary Lehrer

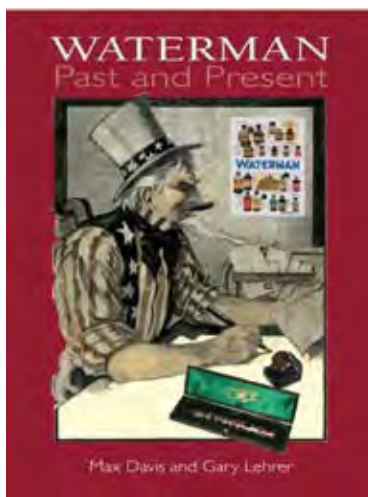
MRG Graphics Ltd., Bucks, Winslow, UK. 2008.

\$99 (\$125 Limited Edition), 235 pages.

IN 1884, NEW YORK INSURANCE SALESMAN Lewis E. Waterman patented his improved ink feed, creating the first truly reliable fountain pen. Frustrated with the poor ink flow of then current pens, he based his design on the “principle of capillary attraction and how it combined with the effects of atmospheric pressure and concluded that the solution to the ink flow problem lay in providing slender tubes through which both air and ink could pass to the nib.” The marketplace was ready for an improved fountain pen, and he sold 200 pens in his first year; by the time of his death in 1901 he was selling 1,000 pens a day.

Collectors Max Davis ([vintagewatermanpens.co.uk](http://vintagewatermanpens.co.uk), [1001pens.com](http://1001pens.com)) and Gary Lehrer ([gopens.com](http://gopens.com)) have chronicled the pens that make up this story in *Waterman Past and Present*, providing a detailed cataloging of Waterman products from the company’s first 60 years. The book will be available in the US by the end of the year, but we were able to obtain a proof copy for this review. As the book title suggests, the story covers Waterman from its beginnings through the 1940s and does not move into the 1950s and beyond.

Following a brief two-page history of the company, the book is organized into three main sections: Pens and Advertisements; Boxes and Ephemera; and Ink Bottles. Eschewing the traditional chronological presentation of pen models, the book instead is organized by pen type and dives right in with a look at the different types and models. So, instead of “Pens 1900–1910,” “Pens 1910 – 1920,” etc., the authors jump right into “Rare overlay pens,” “Snake pens,” “Taper cap pens,” and “Pearl-sided black hard rubber pens,” and from there move through all the Waterman models up through the 1940s. This more or less follows

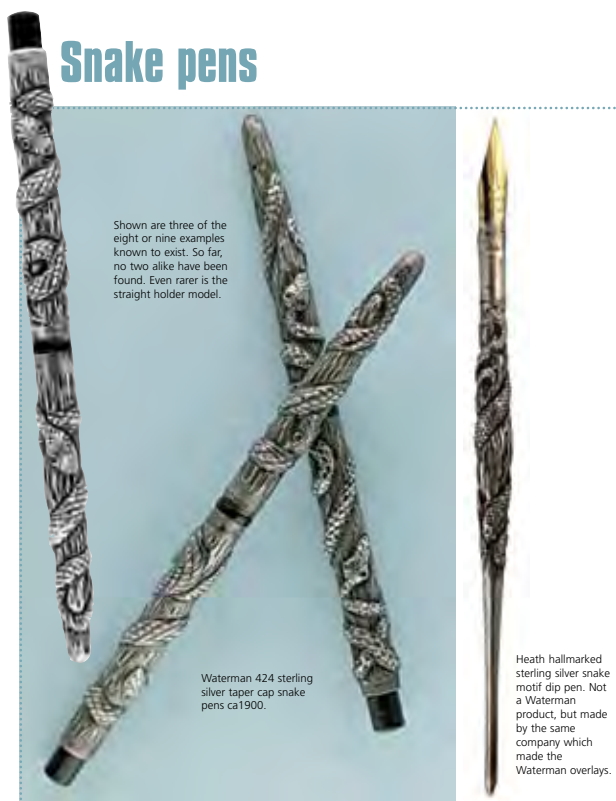


a chronological progression, however, so early pens tend to be at the front of the book and later ones further back. Sprinkled throughout the pen presentation pages are brief sections devoted to samples of advertising and other ephemera, including advertising collateral in Japanese, French and Italian. The pen section contains some extremely rare Waterman pens (e.g., three snake pens, a sterling overlay Indian Scroll, a 502 gold repousse overlay and a 224 ca. 1893 barleycorn overlay taper cap, just to name a few), as well as extensive pictures of most of the remaining Waterman pens of the period.

Waterman, like other pen manufacturers of the period, was a firm believer in the power of advertising, and there are more than 50 pages devoted to an extensive array of Waterman boxes and ephemera. Waterman never missed an opportunity to emblazon its name on anything, and the authors provide ample

evidence with pages of Waterman lamps, coin trays, cigar cutters, binoculars, packing tape, accommodation clips, lamp shades, cowbells (yes, cowbells), ashtrays, trolley cards, postcards and boxes of all kinds. The box collection is extensive, and includes some very rare and elegant designs in wood, leather and Bakelite as well as variations on the ubiquitous blue Waterman boxes of the teens and twenties.

Not to be outdone by the boxes and ephemera, the section on bottles presents 78 pages of what must certainly be the widest array of Waterman ink bottles around. Big bottles, little bottles, glass bottles, metal bottles, wooden bottles, plastic bottles, wine bottles (during WWII, the U.S. Army used Waterman labeled ink put up in wine bottles)—you name it—if it is a Waterman ink bottle, it is probably here. Suffice to



## 100 Year pens



1939 first year pen and pencil. Note the over-the-top "military" clip. 1940 Standard 1940 Oversize 1940 Lady pen and pencil 1941 Standard 1941 Rippled Oversize

say standardization in packaging was not one of Waterman's strong suits. But they were all prominently labeled "Waterman" lest there be any doubt!

The book is attractively designed and laid out, likely due to the skillful hand of Teresa Shepherd, who was also designer of the recent series of Parker books. Advertising backgrounds and insets are used generously to add depth and interest to the pen pages.

So, what is it that this book isn't? First off, it is not a detailed history of the L. E. Waterman Company. The focus is on Waterman's products. Aside from the introductory two-page overview, there is no detailed recap of



Christmas box for pen and pencil, open. Christmas box, closed. Size 162 x 47 x 20mm.



Santa chimney advertisement.



Santa cardboard Ripple 7 sign.


Santa cardboard Ripple 7 sign.

## Fine silver eyedropper pens

999 Fine Silver eyedropper-fill pens ca1900-1907.



Signed Waterman hanging chatelaine pen holders.

Waterman's growth and development as a company or retrospective of company milestones. As well, there are no chapters devoted to manufacturing or design, so if you're looking for detailed information on the full range of Waterman's nibs or when the rivet clip was phased out (answer: it depends), you won't find that information here. The story is told in the products, and what you will find is a thorough and well designed retrospective of Waterman's pens, boxes, advertising material and other ephemera from the most dynamic years of the company's life, and, for that, it is a welcome addition to the collector's bookshelf. 

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## Model 52 pens

ca1915-1929



52 52 52 52 0752 52 52 52 52 chased. 52 smooth.

Identical models were available in other sizes such as 52 1/2, 54 and 56.



Orange wood container. 108mm x 48mm diameter. Label imprint: Waterman's Ideal Ink. Made in U.S.A.

Red wood container. 108mm high x 48mm diameter. Label imprint: Waterman's Ideal Fountain Pen Ink. Manufactured by L.E. Waterman Co. Made in USA between 1892-1910.

Red wood container. 1007mm high x 47mm diameter. with paper label. Made in 1910 in USA.

Waterman wooden case. 118mm high x 43 mm diameter. This is the only Waterman case made with the opening at the bottom for an eyedropper ink bottle.



Paper label showing red wood ink container. Container dimension was 107mm x 47mm diameter. Made in 1910, in USA.



Ink blotter R.E. Prendergast 207 Washington Ave Scranton PA USA.



While other major pen manufacturers had switched to plastic, Waterman was still marketing coloured Ripple hard rubber. This cost it a huge market share, until the introduction of the Patrician in 1929, Waterman's first plastic pen.

Ripple deck pens in Red, Blue-Green, Rose and Olive.

Waterman's

# pen. Bert Heiserman pioneer

by Carla Mortensen

IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG IN THE PEN COMMUNITY TO BECOME AWARE OF Bert Heiserman of Pen Haven in Kensington, Md. From his warm and winning ways to his extraordinary knowledge about pens and pen repairs, to his beautiful wife and delightful (often pen-themed) vests, Bert and his contributions to the pen community writ large have benefitted us all enormously for more than twenty years.

"Bert Heiserman walks in and the room lights up," says pen collector Len Provisor. "He is literally everyone's best friend and a walking encyclopedia."



1930s Parker Collection

Known in the community for kidding, smiling, flirting, and hugging, Bert has had a long and fascinating life, not all of which was related to pens. He was born the youngest of three brothers in Washington, D.C., and now makes his home in Bethesda, Md. He received his Bachelor of Architecture degree from Howard University where he was on the wrestling team and also practiced and taught karate. Following graduation, Bert spent more than 25 years involved in residential and commercial properties—including the design of hundreds of multifamily and single family units. He was married to Sue Heiserman for 15 years. Their son, Jason, and his wife Lauren live outside Baltimore, where Jason is a Director of Student Involvement at Johns Hopkins University.

Bert married Alice Fins in 2002. When Bert married Alice, he became an instant grandfather to Merone Tesfaye and later to Gabriel (now age two). Merone was a winner of the New York City Pen Show essay contest (what do you expect?) a few years ago.

From childhood, Bert was an avid collector, starting with postage stamps like many pen collectors. His hobbies include restoring and driving vintage cars (his favorite being a 1959 Lincoln Continental Mark IV). He is an avid opera and classical music buff. He also is a big fan of animals and has two loving cats—Amadeus Mozart and Giuseppe Verdi.

His interest in fountain pens started in 1986. “I used to

squire a lady friend around to antique stores,” he reminisces. “As a way for her to get me off her back and stop hovering over her and rushing her along, she pointed me in the direction of fountain pens. I was fascinated by the mechanisms and designs. Finally she was free to shop for what she wanted without my interference.”

He estimates he currently has more than 600 pens in his personal collection. One focus is hand-painted ladies pens. He also collects very unusual plastic pens, both English and American.

So how did all this collecting turn into Bert’s “day job”? In 1988, a close friend of his suggested that he take space in an antique shop on Antique Row and start selling some of his pens. For \$25 a month he took the top shelf of a four-foot display cabinet and eventually took over the whole cabinet for \$100 a month and would come in on Saturday and Sunday to sell pens. After two years, Bert took a larger space in the rear of the building. Since that initial display cabinet, Bert estimates that he has bought, restored, and sold somewhere between 15,000 and 20,000 pens.

Then in 1989, he opened up Pen Haven in the same building. That building itself was built in 1880 to house the first train station in town. Later, it became the Kensington Post Office.

In 2002, Louis Wofsey joined him as a partner. They held a grand re-opening on Sept. 3, 2003. Len Provisor, posting on the website Pentrace, reported:



Conklin collection, including some hard-to-find colors

“Pen Haven has expanded to almost three times larger, and is more elegant than the previous store. The new store now carries more than 1,000 vintage and new writing instruments, inkwells, desk sets, and many accessories in the seven display cases and cabinets. The spacious walls are lined with rare pen ads and pen art for sale. There is more seating so that customers may experience writing with an array of fountain pens, or they can browse through the many books available for sale.... Guests of Honor Friday evening were Mr. and Mrs. Geoffrey S. Parker, who joined in greeting guests and friends.”

Bert and Lou are in the store every weekend from noon to 5PM. Bert estimates that there are approximately 1,000 collectors in the greater D.C. metropolitan area, about 100 of whom are truly serious. On a typical weekend, about 50 to 60 customers visit

*...he currently has more than 600 pens  
in his personal collection.*

*One focus is hand-painted ladies pens.*

*He also collects very unusual plastic  
pens, both English and American.*

the store, including long-time pen folks, “newbies,” and visitors from out of town. Many stay for several hours trying out various pens and enjoying the camaraderie of other pen collectors. It takes on the air of a social club.

One of the well-known collectors/dealers who Bert got started in this hobby is Warren Granek of “The Write Shoppe” in Annapolis, and several hundred local collec-

tors who throng the D.C. pen show annually—where Bert’s station is often right inside the entry of the show. “One of the first people you would have met at the show, in the hallway, was the ever cheerful and wonderfully friendly Bert Heiserman, accompanied by his charming wife,” says Jim Mamoulides, pen dealer and former editor of *The Pennant*. “If there is a nicer person selling pens, you’d have to show me.”



Parkers with overlays & “51s” with gold caps




When asked to describe his expertise, Bert says that, although self-taught, he considers his exterior restorations to be among the best. ("Snorkels are a b\*tch"). His customers line up for him to adjust and smooth cranky nibs, which he cheerfully does for free, both in the shop and at shows. "I'd rather they come to me than try to do it themselves."

He also mentions his passion to help newbies identify a pen for purchase and then to guide their collecting. His customers include many ambassadors, politicians, and celebrities. He graciously has given seminars at many of the more than 100 shows he has attended, and his service to the pen community includes a stint on the PCA board.

As many in the community know, we are fortunate to have experienced Bert's warmth, wisdom, and expertise. A severe medical crisis left him in a two-month coma in 1999. "I died three times on the table," Bert admits.

Amazingly, nothing seems to keep Bert down for long. "I've been able to turn a hobby into a business. Twenty-odd years later, I still love it. I'll keep at it as long as I'm physically able."

We all hope that's a long, long time. 

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Right: Bert with his wife Alice.



Celluloid pens from the 1920s and 1930s

## Artifact Reveals Company's Former Grandeur

by Michael Fultz




Reynolds, Waterman, Biro, and others. You may remember some of the slogans applied to these first ball-pens: “makes 8 copies ... but no original”; “writes through butter... but not on paper”; “writes underwater ... but not above it.” The Parker Company did invest in ball pen engineering and product development during this period. In 1953 Parker offered its first ball-pen—a Hopalong Cassidy promotional model complete with cowboy hat. In 1954, Parker introduced its soon to be market-dominating, button-actuated, rotating-refill Jotter. Still, Parker sought to make the ball pen better and longer lasting.

Foremost in this process were improvements in the ball which carried the ink and the seat in which the ball rode and which regulated the flow of ink. Parker engineers held the opinion that if they could make the ball of harder material or if they could impart a texture to the ball that pen performance would be enhanced. Sintering was a fairly new and undeveloped manufacturing process but Parker was prepared to learn and, most importantly, to invest, heavily if necessary, in a novel process.

### It's all about texture

Sintering was and is a process whereby finely divided metal powder is fused into shape using heat and pressure. The fusing process meant even that non metallic compounds such as ceramics could be used. Moreover, since the components were fused rather than melted or alloyed, their individual properties could be maintained. Parker engineers set about sintering metal powders to produce the T-ball Jotter balls—the “T” standing for textured.

Parker's T-ball Jotter came to dominate the world's market for quality ball-pens. The company also became one of the world's leaders in sintering technology producing processes, machinery, and sintered products for consumer and military applications and, soon, for the space program. Such a business, however, required a different focus from that of making and selling writing instruments. Parker's approach was to spin off the sintering part of its business, retaining some ownership but transferring management to the former employees who had developed and understood the business. Parker continued to make pens, slowly declining to its current status as a brand name owned by Newell Rubbermaid and operated to be a mostly budget priced line. All production has long since been moved offshore. No pens are made in Janesville.

Today, on the outskirts of Janesville, however, stands a giant and modern manufacturing plant, many acres of floor space in size, operated by a business going by the name “SSI”—SSI stands for Sintered Specialties, Inc.—which is the current incarnation of that Parker development of 50 years ago. 

**M**ANY OF YOU KNOW I SOLD MY PEN COLLECTION A COUPLE OF YEARS ago. Greg Sachs now owns the Sachs-Fultz collection. Recently, my wife has been on my case to clean up the Wisconsin retreat just a little and I have found a few things which belong to Sachs but about which he will kindly permit me to write.


One such object will seem trivial but tells volumes about the former state of American pen manufacturing and business in general. In the days after World War II, Parker Pen and its chief competitor, Sheaffer, were state of the art, world class makers of consumer goods. They were fully integrated companies and provided much of their own support services. The small object I found is part of those services—it is a printing block from Parker's in-house print shop, used, in this case, for the printing of corporate letterhead stationary for company executives. Today, most businesses have scrapped their in-house printers for Kinkos. Moreover, in the 1960s, American companies like Parker exported products—unlike today when they seem mostly to export jobs.

However, this block tells so much more about Parker ... it features the 'halo arrow' logotype used by the company after about 1960. It also is inscribed “Sintered Specialties Division” and “Panoramic Corporation.” The Parker expert may know that Panoramic was a wholly owned subsidiary of Parker Pen and generally provided packaging and other products to the company.

It may take a degree in metallurgy, however, for a reader to know what sintering is or why Parker should be heavily invested in the process in 1960. A brief description of the writing instrument business at that time may help with the explanation. Parker had resisted the stampede toward ball pens just after World War II. They left the sales of the untried and, very frequently, non-working ball points to

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## PCA Tomorrow, from >>> 14

Will we survive? Or we become another casualty in a world where literacy and good penmanship no longer count? Will the PCA be relevant to a new generation of pen collectors? Or will it be a stodgy, obscure organization of limited value and interest? Will change and technology be the driving force behind a vibrant PCA that welcomes pen collectors of all ages and all interests? Or will new gadgets lure our young generation away from reading and writing? It all depends on us. It depends on what we value and whether or not we decide to get involved. Either way, the future is in our hands. 


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*What do you think? Any ideas, hopes, dreams for the PCA? Drop me a note at [wordherder62@gmail.com](mailto:wordherder62@gmail.com) and we'll run selected letters from members in a future issue of The Pennant.*

## The Mysterious Clickit, from >>> 25

manufacture its own nibs, nor did it have its nibs stamped with any logo or name.

The Clickit fountain pen has a pleasing streamline shape, with slightly tapered cap and barrel, similar to other streamline pens but with flat ends. The earlier notched collar version is 14 cm long and the threaded button version is 13 cm long. Additionally, the Clickit was offered with a shorter barrel. While the diameter of the shorter version was the same as the full size pen, it is more of a "junior" length. The diameter of each of these is about the size of a number 4 or 5 size standard fountain pen.

Finally, the authors have been generally stymied and unsuccessful in their efforts to uncover historic information regarding the Clickit fountain pen and its inventors. If other collectors have seen or have any information about the Clickit fountain pen and/or the manufacturer or inventor, or have Clickits in their collection in colors other than those identified in this article, the authors would welcome any additional information provided. 

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*If you have a Clickit or information on the company or people who designed or manufactured it, we'd love to hear from you. Drop me an e-mail at [wordherder62@gmail.com](mailto:wordherder62@gmail.com) and tell us what you know. Mike and Pete would love to clear up some of the murkiness of this quirky pen from the golden era of fountain pen design and manufacturing.—Ed.*



**"Two Clickits, locking tab collar model (top) and button-controlled filling collar model (bottom)."**

# Remembering Dan McNamara

I am sad to report the loss of my friend and pen buddy Dan McNamara, who passed away after a long illness. I met Dan at the Boston Pen Show 20 or so years ago, and I was impressed by his display of "killer" pens (a word that Dan often used to describe many of the items in his collections). They included a Waterman Tree Trunk pen and many other early fancy overlay and filigree pens.



But I was more impressed by Dan himself, and we became fast friends. On several occasions at the Brimfield Antique Market, and at antique shops in upstate New York and New

England, dealers would look at me like I was crazy when I asked if they had any pens for sale. "Sure I do," they'd say, "but I'm saving them for Dan McNamara!" I'd just chuckle and walk on, knowing the dealers couldn't save them for a nicer guy.

Dan was well known to collectors, and he participated in many of the major pen shows throughout the country over the past twenty years. Although he loved early Waterman fountain pens, he had fine eye for quality within many areas of antiques and collectibles. He loved all of his collections, especially Tiffany lamps and antique glass paperweights.

He could find a treasure in places that no one else thought of looking. It was as if he had a built-in GPS that guided him and he would often be at a paperweight show one week and a pen show the next. He loved to travel and every day was an adventure for him.

Dan held a second-degree black belt in kempo style karate, and he modeled his life after the martial arts tenets of courtesy, integrity, perseverance, self-control and indomitable spirit. He delighted in telling me about a killer match he had with a kid a third his age or the new "killer" paperweight or pen he had just found, and most importantly, what was going on with his family. He held a degree in public health and was a registered sanitarian. He was retired from the City of Boston and had been the Principal Housing Inspector there. Dan lived to the fullest and his joy of life was infectious. He is survived by his wife Therese and daughter Teri.

—Paul Erano with added thoughts by Terry Mawhorter

## JOIN A CLUB

Looking to network with fellow pen collectors?

Check out a local pen club. Not listed here? Email your club information including contact name, email and phone number to: [info@pencollectors.com](mailto:info@pencollectors.com)

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## FROM THE **PRESIDENT**

### CHARTING THE PATH FOR THE FUTURE

Winter means not just bundling up, but looking forward to the year-end holidays and a new year. The past year has been a momentous one for the PCA. A new board began planning the organization's future, endured a great loss, and, yet, managed to continue the work begun with Sonya Mawhorter.

As you read this, membership has reached new highs, the Pens for Kids program has expanded and we are building a new, interactive website that will be ready to go for the new year.

Thanks, in part, to membership Chair Kim Sosin, ably assisted by Kim Svabik (we think of them as the Kims), our membership now exceeds, by a good bit, 1,000, and that may be a new high for the organization.

Linda Bauer and Bill Hong, supported by a team of volunteers, have expanded the Pens for Kids program. We are now presenting this popular activity at almost all the major national and regional shows. We also now have not just Linda's PowerPoint presentation, but, thanks to a grant from the Sachs/Fultz Collection, our own data projector on which to present it.

By the time you read this, work will be well underway on a new website. As I write this in late September, it's hard to talk about it, because it is in early planning, but our web developer Barry Eckhouse (who is a Professor in the Graduate Business Program and the Director of Technology at St. Mary's College of California) assures us that this fully interactive website will feature accessible state of the art technology. At the same time it will be fully accessible—whether you access it via cable technology in Manhattan or dialup in eastern Oregon.

As important, it will, at long last, feature a complete, downloadable digital library. Our expectation is that by January 2009 every member will have complete access to the entire library.

In addition to these activities, Deb Kinney, assisted by Richard Binder, makes sure that you get news and views every month through the electronic newsletter, *PCAccent*; and our new Treasurer, John Jenkins, is working closely with board member Ernesto Soler to ensure our finances are up to date and in order. Joel Hamilton and Carla Mortensen, as our senior board members, make sure that I don't do anything too stupid.

So, as 2008 comes to an end, exciting things are happening in the PCA. If you are reading this (probably off the table at a pen show) and are not a member, why not join? Clearly you think enough of the organization to beg, borrow or steal the magazine. If, on the other hand, you have pen collecting friends who are not members, what better gift for the holidays than a one- or even three-year membership in the PCA?

To all, members or not, happy holidays and best wishes for the new year.

Rick Propas, *President*



## Upcoming Shows

*Location and dates may be subject to change; please contact the show organizers to verify information below. The PCA keeps an up-to-date listing of current and pending U.S. pen shows on the PCA website: [pencollectors.com](http://pencollectors.com), courtesy of Susan Wirth.*

**Ohio Pen Show**

Nov. 6–9, 2008  
Crowne Plaza Hotel, Dublin  
Terry Mawhorter, 614.619.5025

**Philadelphia Pen Show**

January 23–25  
Sheraton/Philadelphia Center  
Bert Oser, 800.782.7680

**Los Angeles Pen Show**

February 12–15  
Manhattan Beach Marriott  
Boris Rice, 281.496.7152

**Long Island Pen Show**

March 21–22  
Hofstra State University  
Terry Brack, 631.235.4690  
Mike Bloom, 516.505.5005

**Atlanta Pen Show**

March 20–22  
Crowne Plaza Atlanta Perimeter NW  
Boris Rice, 281.496.7152

**Chicago Pen Show**

April 30–May 3  
Westin O'Hare/Rosemont  
Don Lavin, 847.272.2745

**Boston Pen Show**

May 30–31  
Holiday Inn Somerville  
Rob Morrison, 828.298.0331

**Raleigh Pen Show**

June 4–7  
Embassy Suites, Cary, NC  
Terry Mawhorter, 614.619.5025

**Portland Pen Show**

July 9–12  
Embassy Suites Downtown  
Carla Mortensen, 503.282.0020

**Miami Pen Show**

July 17–19  
The Biltmore, Coral Gables  
Bert Oser, 800.782.7680

**DC Supershow**

August 6–9  
Sheraton Premiere Tyson's Corner  
Bob Johnson, 864.963.3834

**Dallas Pen Show**

September 25–27  
Sheraton Dallas North  
Pete Kirby, 972.529.6364

*Show organizers are encouraged to submit show details for this column to the editor.*

## PCA Pen Show Supporters

*The PCA expresses its gratitude to the sponsors of the following pen shows for graciously donating table space. Thanks for your generosity!*

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Michigan: Michigan Pen Collectors Club

NYC/NJ: Mary Ann & Steve Zucker

Ohio: Terry Mawhorter

## Pennant Back Issues

Back issues of *The Pennant* are available. Most are photocopies. All are \$10 each + \$5 postage and handling in the U.S. per order, overseas postage will vary. All requests for reprints should be addressed to:

**Dan Reppert, PCA Librarian, PCA Library, P.O. Box 447, Fort Madison, IA 52627-0447; e-mail: [wasp1908@mchsi.com](mailto:wasp1908@mchsi.com)**

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**1994**—February, May, August

**1995**—Spring/Winter, Fall/Winter

**1996**—Spring, Winter/Fall

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**1998**—Spring, Fall

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**2002**—Spring, Summer, Winter

**2003**—Spring, Summer, Winter

**2004**—Spring/Summer, Winter

**2005**—Spring/Summer, Winter

**2006**—Spring, Summer, Winter

**2007**—Spring, Summer, Fall

**2008**—Spring, Summer, Fall

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The PCA membership year runs from January–December. Membership renewal notices are sent each November to those due to renew. If you join the PCA between Oct. 1 and Dec. 31, your membership is automatically extended through the following year.

As a current member, don't forget to send any updated personal information to [info@pencollectors.com](mailto:info@pencollectors.com). If you've moved, changed your name, changed your email, added a FAX line, or made any other changes, it will not be correct in the listings unless you tell us! We are pleased to offer membership levels with added benefits. As a non-profit, all-volunteer organization, the PCA is only as good as the support it receives. Your contributions keep *The Pennant* arriving on your doorstep three times a year, help support the PCA projects and enable the PCA to continue to grow and improve. When you renew your membership this year, we hope you'll consider one of our special new membership levels, which are detailed at the left. Even if your membership is not up for renewal, it's easy to upgrade to one of the special membership levels—simply drop us a line or email us at: [info@pencollectors.com](mailto:info@pencollectors.com). Thanks for your support!

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 Contact Dan Reppert for details: [info@pencollectors.com](mailto:info@pencollectors.com).*

**VICTOR CHEN** recently retired from his position as Professor of History at Chabot College. Chen continues his Tech Notes column, a regular feature in *The Pennant*.

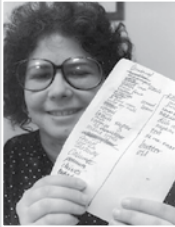


**PAUL ERANO** has collected and written about fountain pens for over two decades, is a fixture at pen shows and writes non-stop on the subject. He is author of two fountain pen books, including *Fountain Pens Past and Present*, and a new book is in progress. He publishes *Erano's Quarterly Pen Review*, a quarterly dedicated to vintage fountain pens and writes the 'Collecting' column for *Stylus* magazine.



**L. MICHAEL FULTZ** is a writer, pen collector and manufacturer. He is a contributing editor to *Pen World International* and editorial director of *Penbid*. He makes and sells his own line of precious metal, vulcanite, and/or acrylic fountain pens. He lives in Chicago or in Milton, Wisconsin with his wife Martha.

**KATE GLADSTONE** teaches and remediates handwriting internationally, working and traveling from her home in Albany, NY. To better understand and help left-handers, she taught herself to write left-handed.



**RICHARD JARVIS** has spent more than 20 years in journalism, including time as a newspaper reporter and editor. He has suffered from a life-long pen affliction that seems to have no cure in sight. His collecting interests include vintage pens with stub and other specialty nibs as well as German piston-fillers. He lives in Roswell, Ga., and is a native of North Carolina.



**TOM LEVIEN** began collecting pens about a dozen years ago when he went to replace a Montblanc ballpoint that had been stolen. When the clerk asked if he wanted a ballpoint or a fountain pen, something clicked and thus began a slippery slope of pen accumulation. He has many collecting foci, with a particular concentration on vintage Camels, Sheaffer Targas, and modern Italian pens with interesting materials.



**DAVID MOAK** remembers Sheaffer cartridge pens from his school days. His re-acquaintance with fountain pens came when his wife Mary Jane taught him a simple calligraphic hand. His collection gradually centered on Mabie, Todd (& Bard). He researched and produced *Mabie in America*, the definitive work on the U.S. company.



**CARLA MORTENSEN**, when not drooling over pens and trying to run the Portland Pen Show, can be found teaching ESL at Portland State University, her fourth and (so far) favorite career. "Pen collecting started for me when I inherited my grandfather's pen in 1999, a stunning Edward Todd 14K gold overlay. My daily users at the moment are a Namiki VP, an Omas Ogiva Guilloche with a John Mottishaw cursive italic nib, and a customized Parker Insignia."

**RICK PROPAS** is president of the PCA and the sole proprietor of PENguin, a website for fountain pen collectors that focuses on Parkers, Pelikans and other German and American pens. To support his hobby he is a United States history professor at San Jose State University.



**TOM REHKOPF** is a computer system architect in Atlanta, Ga. He has written several articles for *The Pennant*, and has been collecting pens for over 18 years. "My collection remains largely unfocused," he says proudly, "except of course for brown Parker '51's, which you can never have enough of."



**PETER SACOPULOS** practices law in Terre Haute, Indiana where he lives with his wife, Melony, and daughters, Ali and Olivia. He has been collecting fountain pens for nearly twenty years and has focused his collecting on Security fountain pens and pens with unusual filling systems.

**MIKE WALKER** is retired and lives with his wife, Marty, in Dallas where he enjoys his children and grandchildren. He has been collecting vintage pens since 1994 and focuses on Wahl-Eversharp Dorics, Sheaffer Roseglows, and Conklin Nozacs, plus some off-brands.



**COLONEL WILLIAM C. THORPE**, noted pen collector, Peruvian Paso horse breeder and hack writer spent 45 years in the National Intelligence and Security community and retired from the U.S. Army. Will served in the Pentagon, the White House, the Central Intelligence Agency, "visited" 33 countries and only got thrown out of two! Will had his first fountain pen at the age of eight and has been putting ink on paper for 57 years. Will and his wife, Christine Ruth Nasisse Thorpe, the Italian Babe, live on a small ranch in North Texas.





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The Pennant invites you to submit articles of interest to the PCA membership. Contributions should be submitted as email attachments, on floppy disk or on CD, using standard word processing software.

Articles: We welcome articles dealing with pen collecting, writing instruments, pen manufacturers, ephemera, news about your recent finds, and Letters to the Editor. *The Pennant* "Author's Guidelines" document is available upon request, and members of the editorial staff and PCA Board are available to assist you. Submit your article in Microsoft Word. Please do not use auto-numbering or imbed your images in your text file.

Illustrations/Photos: When submitting images, be certain that they are scanned at no less than 300 pixels per inch. Photos look best on a non-reflective white background (lucite is good and foam board works well). Images may be submitted as email attachments or on CD as JPG images. We cannot use images imbedded in text documents or spreadsheets.

Deadlines: Available on request. Contributions are subject to editorial review and should be sent to: PCA, Attn: Editor, The Pennant, PO Box 447, Fort Madison, IA 52627-0447 or via email to: [info@pencollectors.com](mailto:info@pencollectors.com).

All opinions expressed in The Pennant are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of the PCA, its directors, or members.

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**PEN SHOW:** Third Long Island Pen Show, Saturday & Sunday, 21 & 22 March 2009. Hofstra University, Hempstead, Long Island, NY. [www.LIpenshow.com](http://www.LIpenshow.com) contact [terry@LIpenshow.com](mailto:terry@LIpenshow.com).

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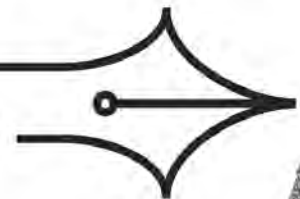
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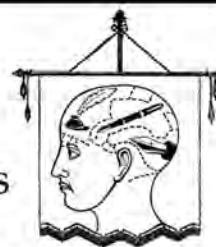
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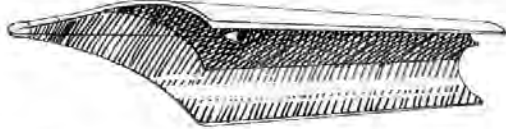
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